

Fatal Overdoses, Dane County, 2000-2023

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Agenda

Source data

Local and national trends

Substances involved

Decedent demographics

Racial disparities

Public Health prevention and harm reduction efforts

Key takeaways



Data Source

Vital Records

**Deaths among
Dane County
residents
reported ≤ 72
hours**

**ME determines
underlying &
contributing
causes of death**

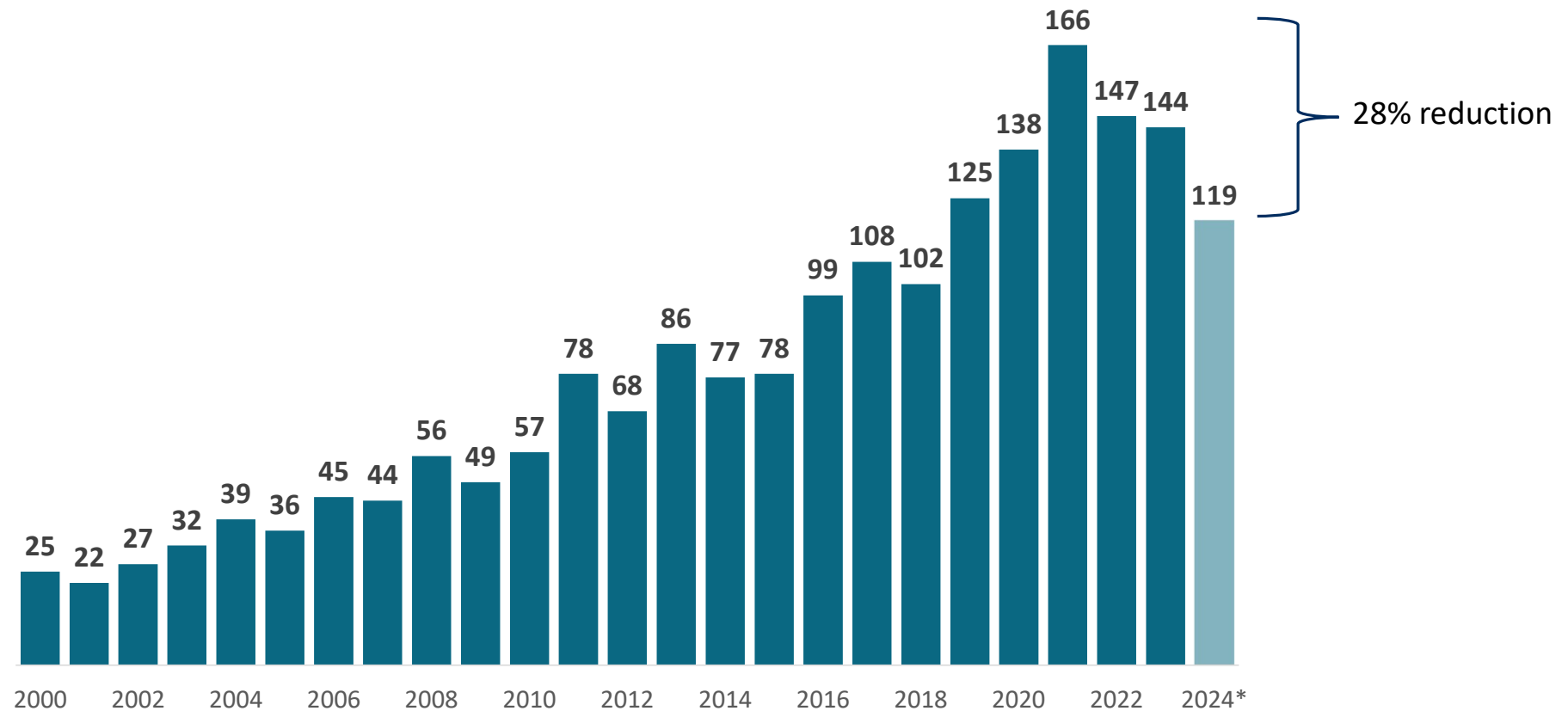
**DHS assigns
the final ICD-10
codes**

Inclusion criteria: overdose as underlying cause; all intents



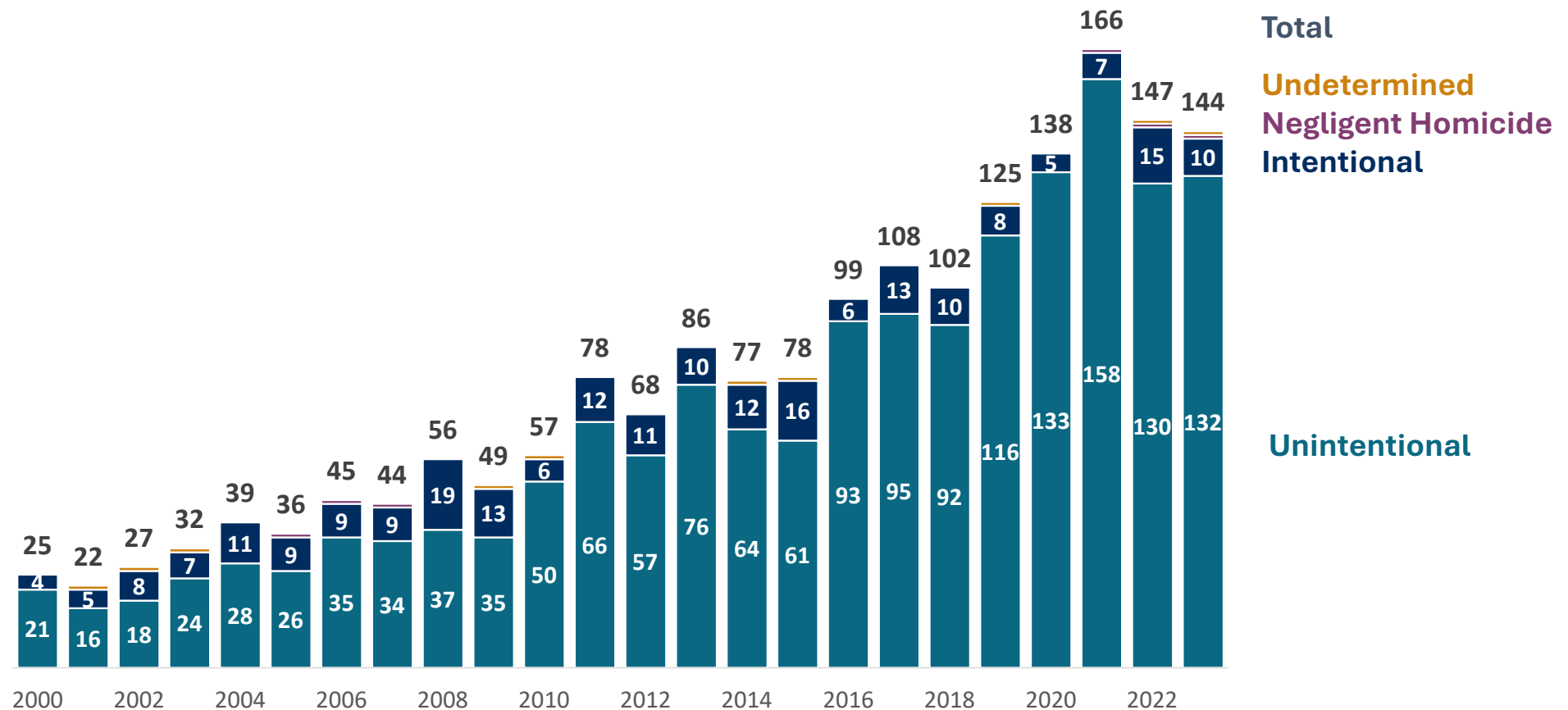
Local & National Trends

The **number of fatal overdoses** among Dane County residents has declined in recent years.



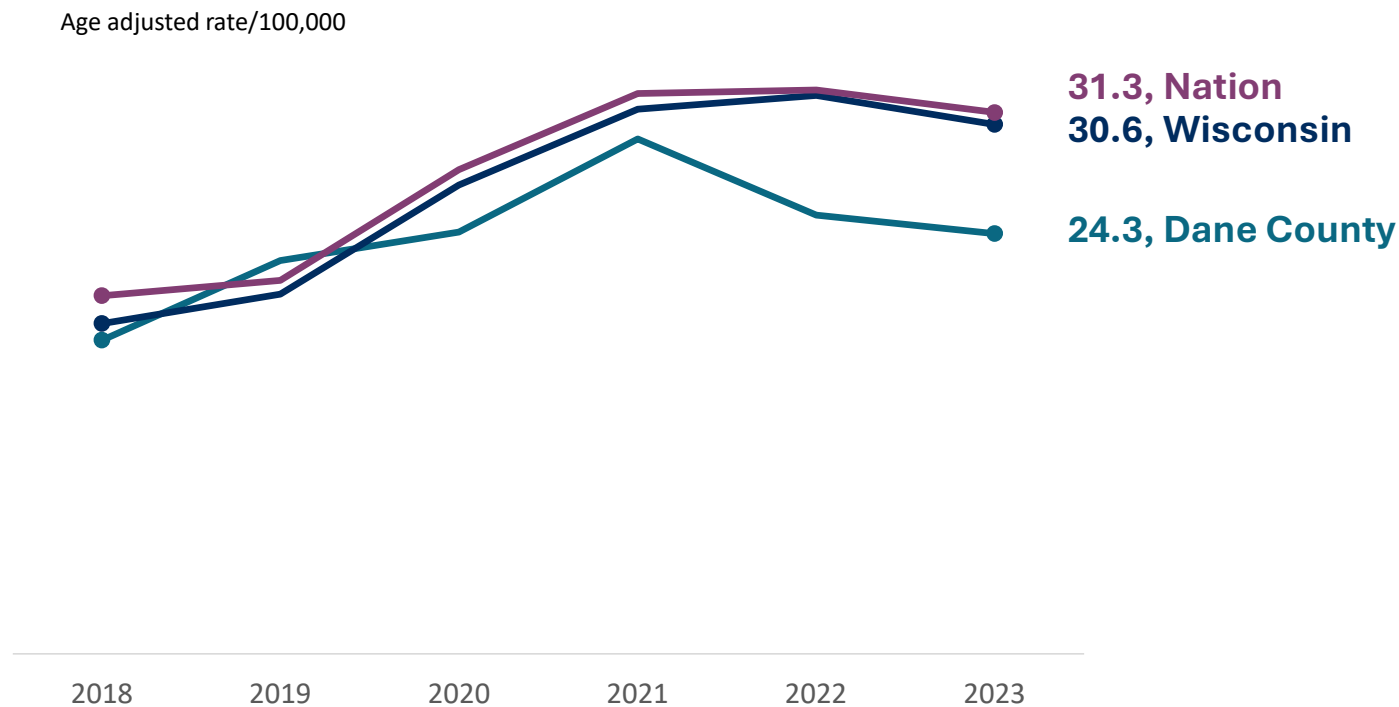
**2024 data are provisional; data as of July 7, 2025*

90% of fatal overdoses are **unintentional**.



*2024 data are provisional; data as of July 7, 2025

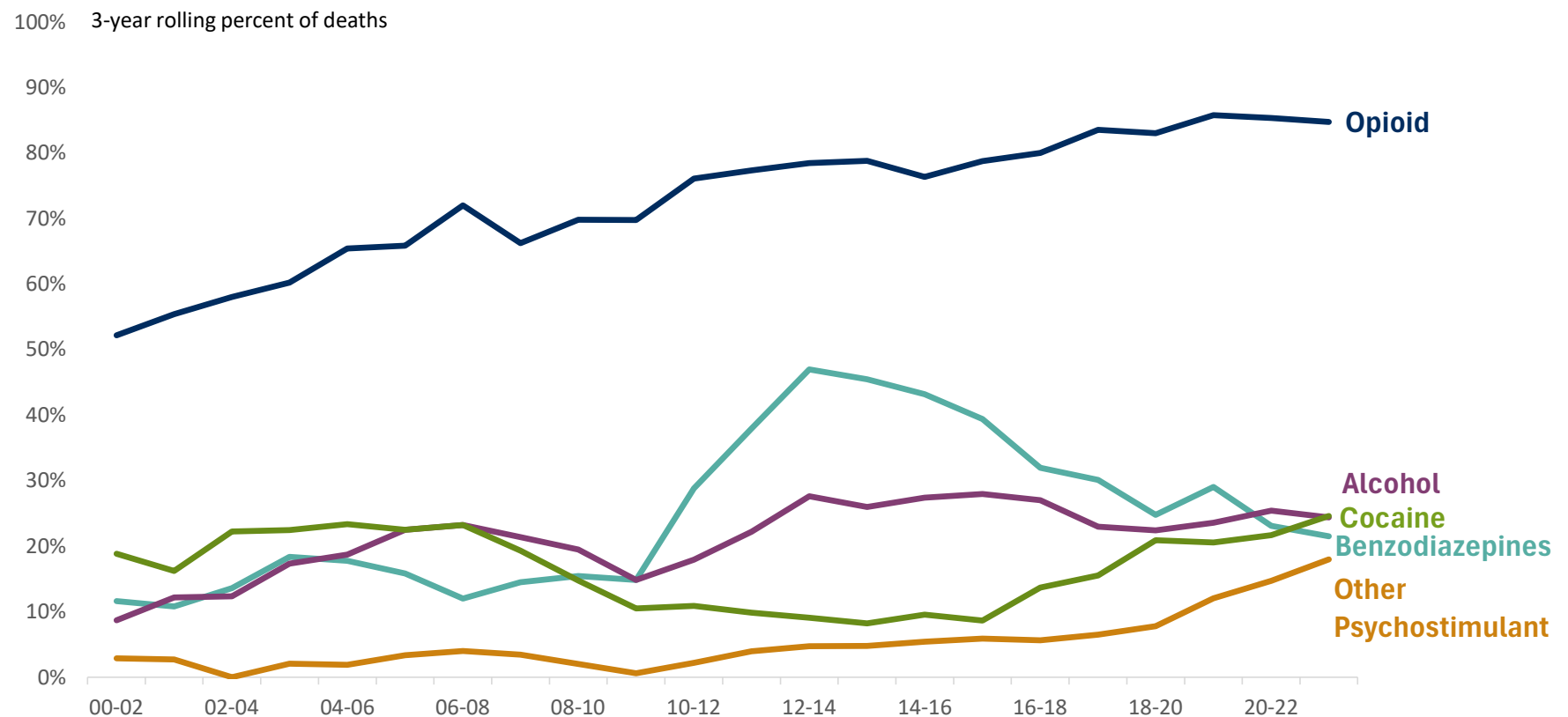
The age-adjusted overdose fatality rate in **Dane County** began to decrease earlier than, and is lower than, **Wisconsin** and the **US** as a whole.





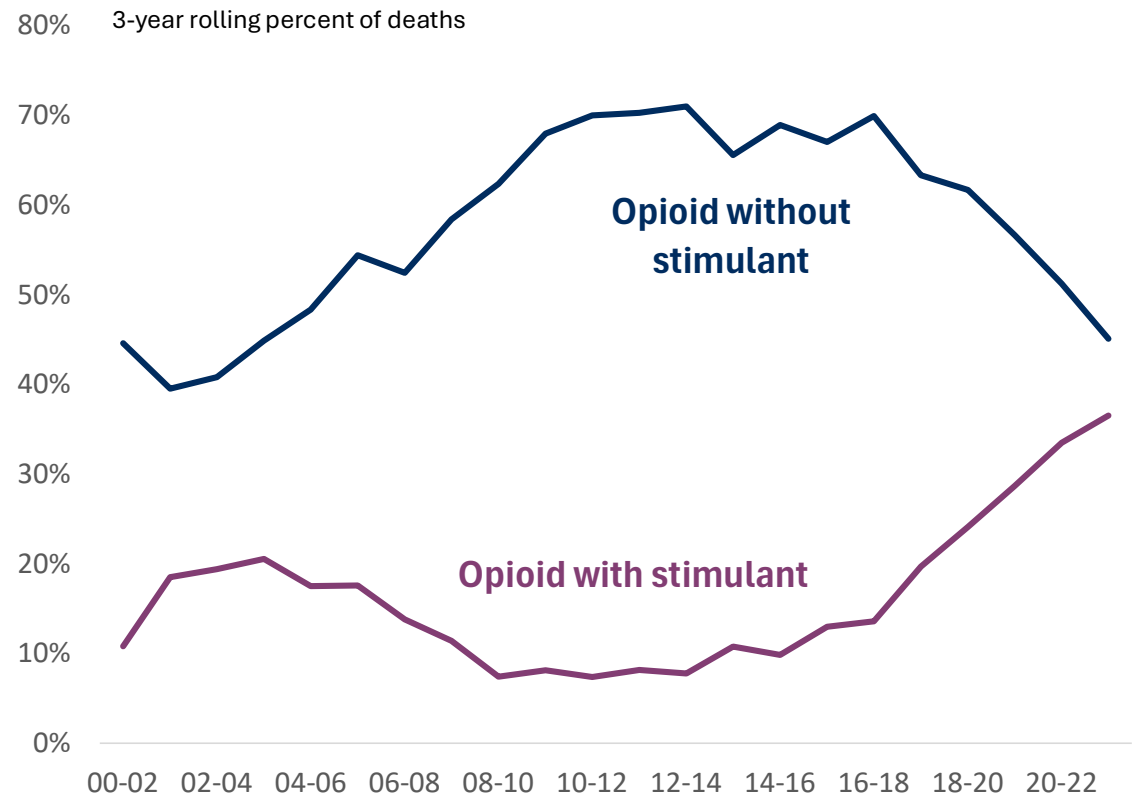
Substances Involved

Opioids continue to be present in 80% of all overdose deaths. An increasing proportion of deaths involve **cocaine** and **other stimulants**.



2/3 fatal overdoses involve different classes of substances

The proportion of deaths with **both an opioid and a stimulant** is increasing.



Examples of drug checking results

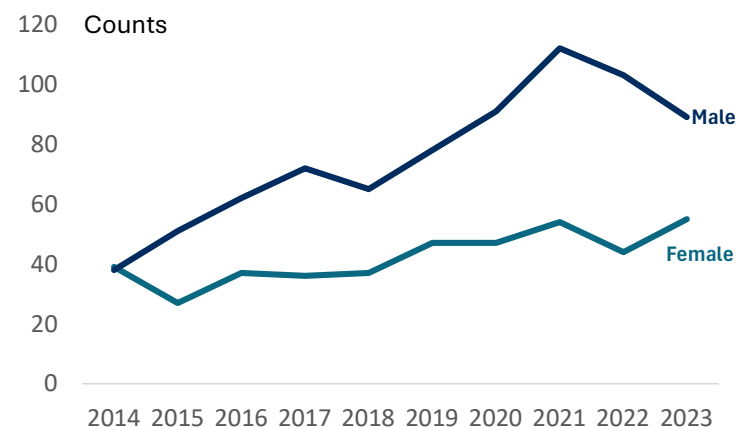
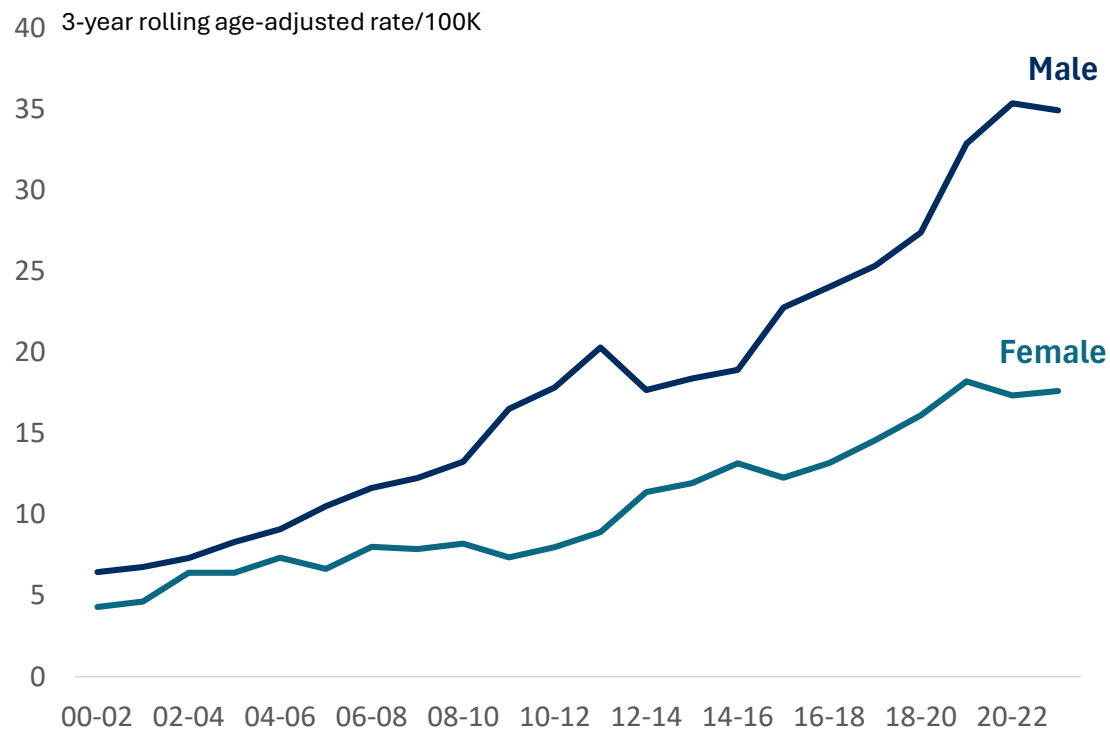
5 samples from Madison (3) and Milwaukee (2) thought to be heroin, with or without fentanyl

- Sample 1: Bis(2,2,6,6-tetramethyl-4-piperidyl) (BTMPS) , an industrial compound used to block UV light in plastic products
- Sample 2: methamphetamine, caffeine, morphine, quinine
- Sample 3: lidocaine, tramadol, xylazine, dextromethorphan, 4-ANPP, fentanyl, BTMPS, traces of acetaminophen
- Sample 4: caffeine, diphenhydramine, xylazine, 4-ANPP, **heroin**, fentanyl and many other trace compounds (flualprazolam, phenethyl 4-ANPP, p-fluorofentanyl, 6-monoacetylmorphine, lidocaine)
- Sample 5: gabapentin, lidocaine, ketamine, tramadol, xylazine with trace chemicals of diphenhydramine, despropionyl p-fluorofentanyl, delta-9-THC

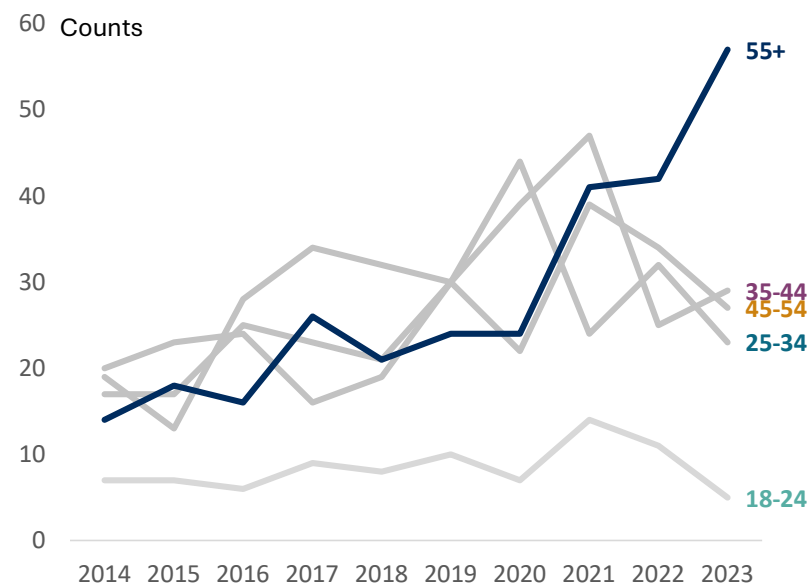
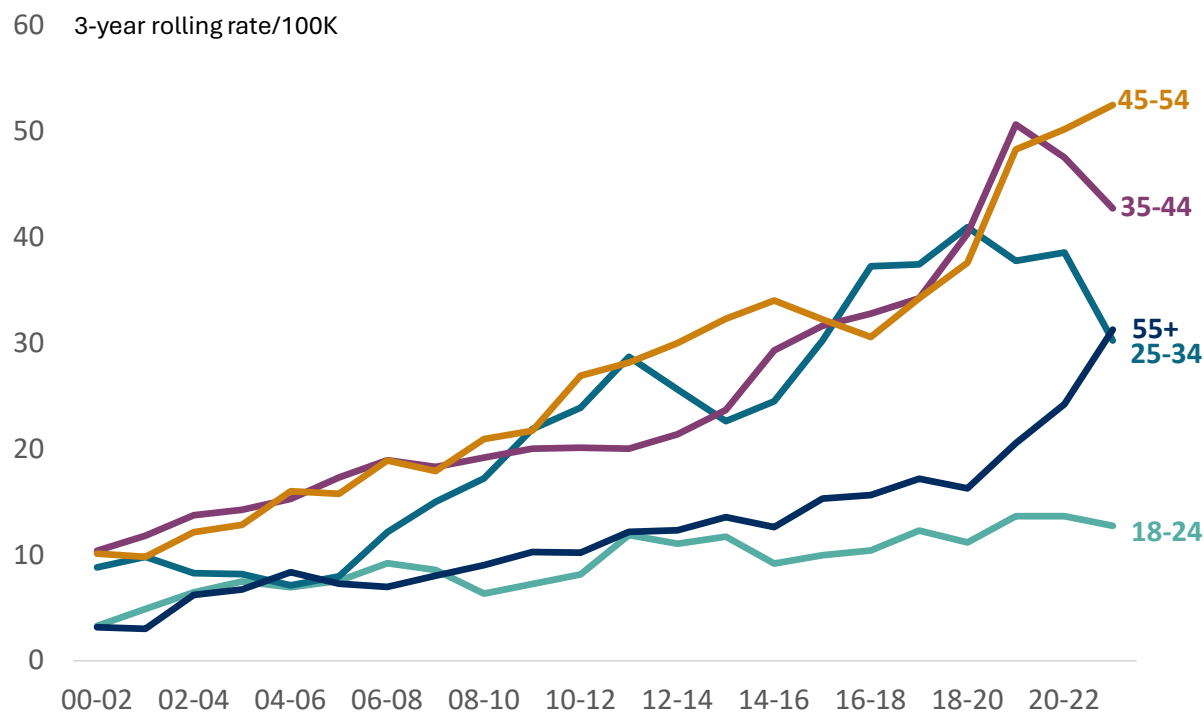


Decedent Demographics

The rate and number of fatal overdoses in **men** is twice that of **women**. Men have experienced greater recent declines than women.

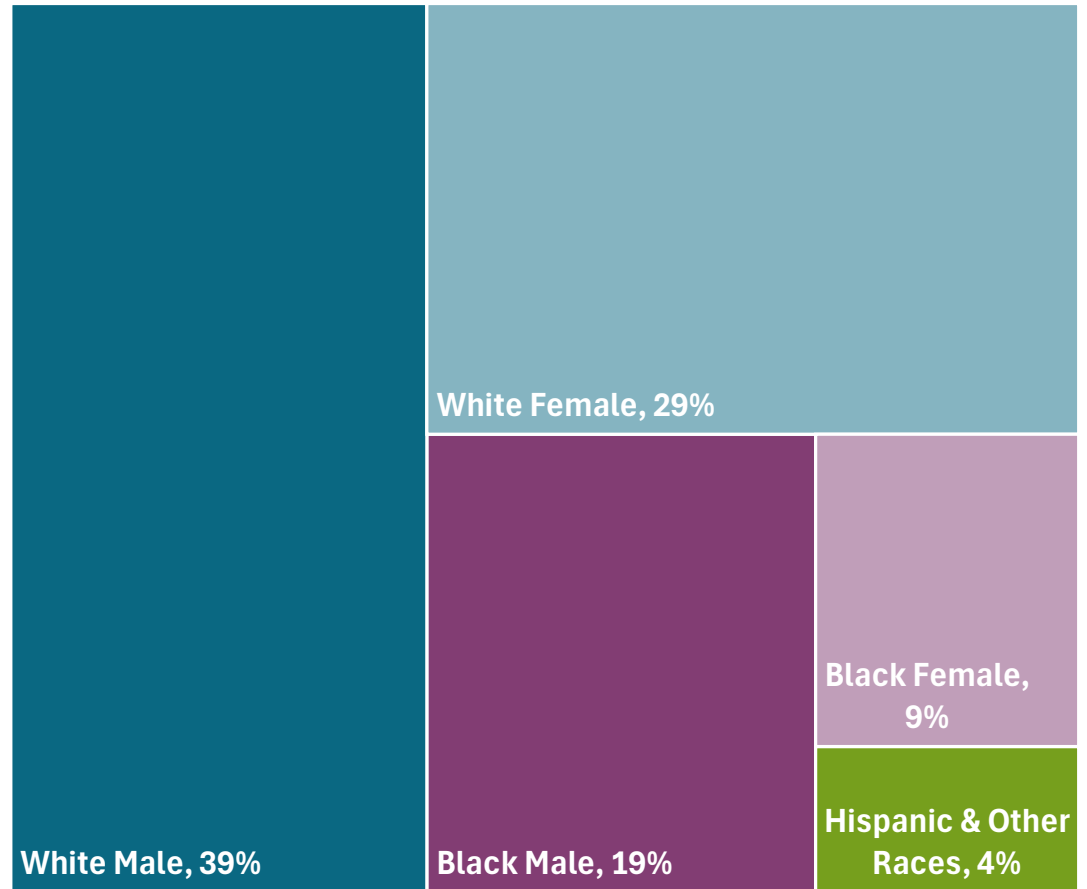


The overdose fatality rate is highest among those **ages 45-54** but the number and rate is fastest growing among those **55 and older**.



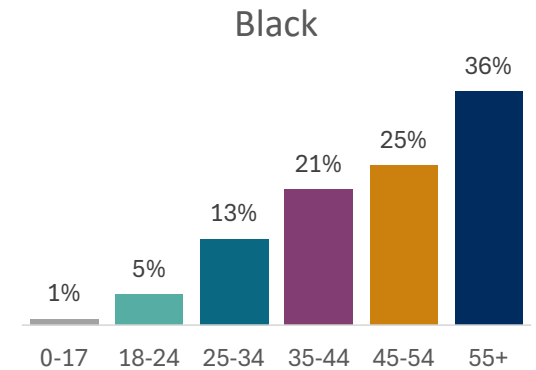
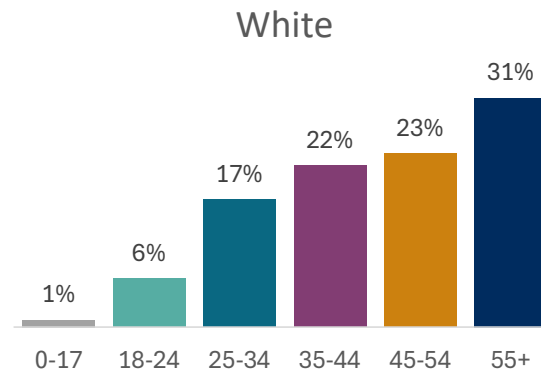
Numbers not shown for <17 age group. 22 Dane County children died from 2000-2023.

People who were ages 55+ at the time of death are reflective of the racial/ethnic makeup of all people who died of a drug overdose.

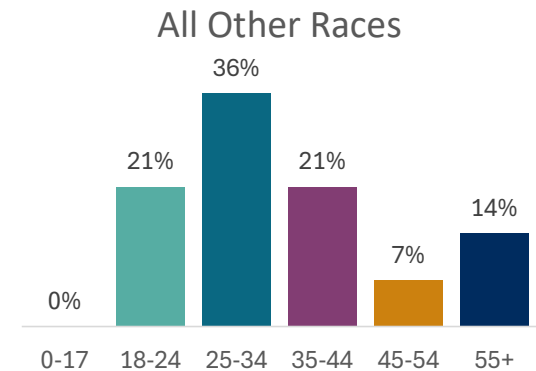
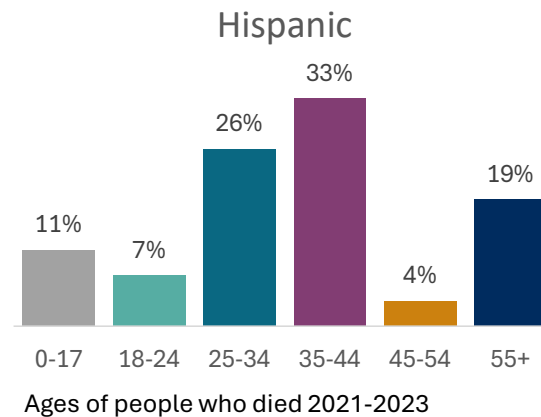


Race/Ethnicity of people who died 2021-2023

Within the white and Black populations, people who died of an overdose were more likely to be middle aged or older.

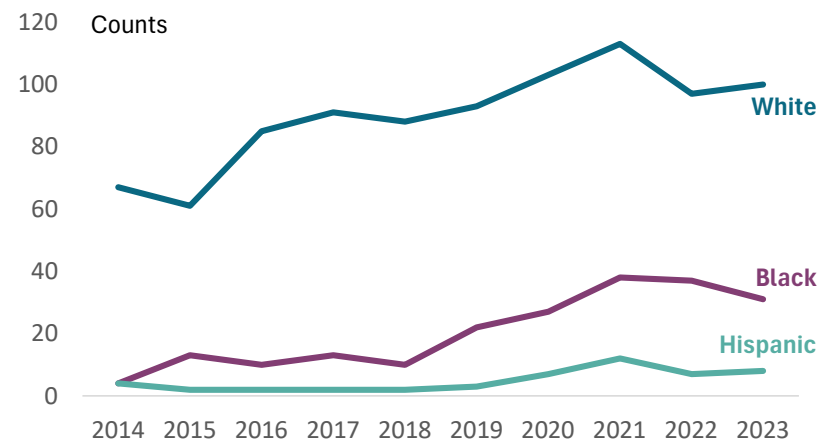
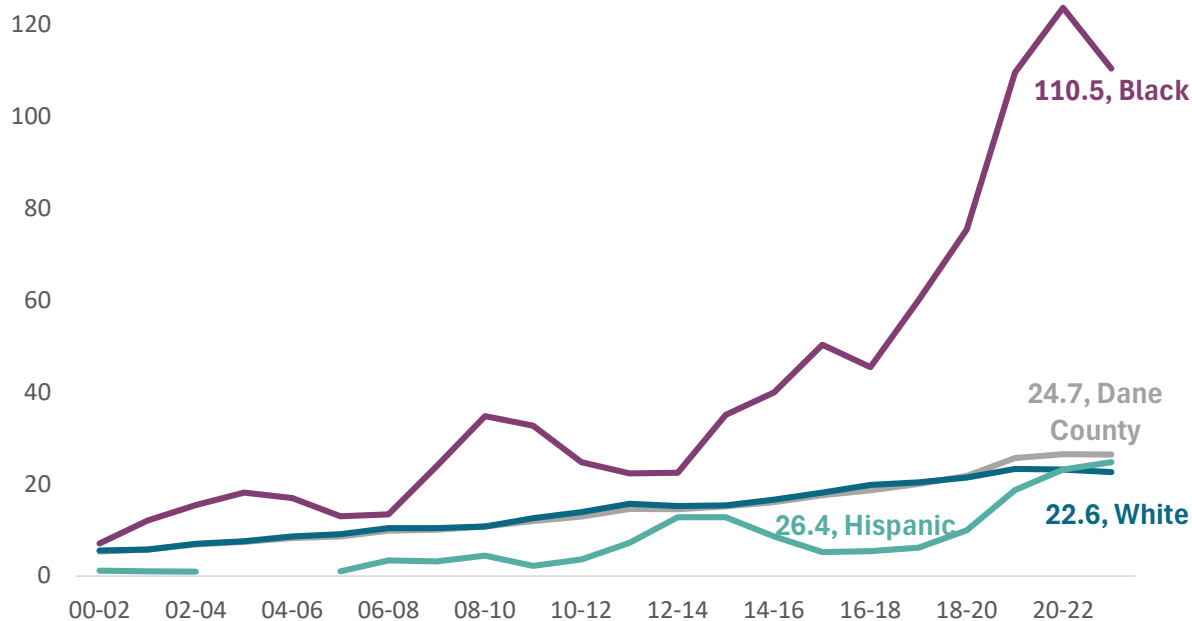


People who were Hispanic or had other racial identities were likely to be younger.



The overdose death rate is highest among **Black people**. A decreasing number of deaths have been experienced by people of all races and ethnicities.

140 3-year rolling age-adjusted rate/100K





Racial Disparities

Contributing Factors



**Stigma
and
mistrust**



**Economic
stressors**



**Unequal
access to
healthcare
&
treatment**



**Lack of
culturally
relevant
approaches**



**Fentanyl-
contaminated
drug supply**



**Over-
policing
&
criminalization**

Solutions



Invest in job training, living-wage employment, and asset-building programs to foster upward mobility.



Center Black voices in program design and invest in mobile or decentralized services to make strides toward service equity.



Expand community-led support networks to combat isolation and provide culturally relevant guidance for recovery, developing trauma-informed mental health services designed by and for Black communities, and prioritize trust-building and cultural humility.



Implement evidence-based drug education in schools and community programs, including honest dialogue about risks like fentanyl contamination.



Public Health Efforts



Syringe Services

Harm reduction supplies for all modes of use

Risk reduction education and linkages to other services

2024: over 14,500 visits

Overdose Fatality Review

Multi-disciplinary team

Meets bi-monthly to identify common systemic themes and develop recommendations

Sample recommendations: expand access to low-barrier naloxone, host a listening session on culturally relevant drug education and harm reduction for Black people, enhance members' knowledge of various systems (housing, corrections)





Key Takeaways

- 1 The number of fatal overdoses among Dane County residents has declined since the peak in 2021.
- 2 Opioids continue to be present in 80% of all overdose deaths. An increasing proportion of deaths involve cocaine and other stimulants.
- 3 There has been an increasing number of fatal overdose among people ages 55 and older.
- 4 Racial disparities continue to be a significant issue that will require changes within systems.
- 5 There are a lot of successful prevention and harm reduction efforts happening across the county.



Data & Reports



Data Reports and Dashboards

[Find our data about public health in Dane County.](#)

[Access our respiratory illness dashboard](#)

[Access our reportable disease dashboard](#)

[Access our mosquito dashboard](#)

Reports

[Expand all](#)

Community Health



Communicable Disease



Environmental Health



Immunizations



Injury, Overdose, and Violence Prevention



- [Gun Violence in Dane County PDF \(2023\)](#)
- [Drug Overdose Deaths in Dane County PDF \(2025\) 2022 version](#)
- [Violent Crime Trends in Madison PDF \(2022\)](#)



Thank you!

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